

Soviets Add To Force in Lithuania

Armored Column Arrives as Leaders In Vilnius Seek Talks

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MOSCOW, April 1—The Kremlin reinforced its military presence in Lithuania today, hours after a tough statement from President Mikhail Gorbachev calling on the rebel republic to rescind its declaration of independence.

Lithuanian government leaders said they were ready for talks with Moscow on any issue, including Soviet security interests in the Baltic, but would not revoke their March 11 proclamation of independence. The Lithuanian parliament is to meet Monday to discuss Gorbachev's appeal.

The latest burst of Soviet military activity in Vilnius, the Lithuanian capital, came as the Kremlin effectively sealed the republic off from foreign journalists. All Moscow-based correspondents were ordered to leave Lithuania by today, forcing them to depend in the future on information gathered largely by telephone.

Spokesmen for the Lithuanian parliament said several dozen armored personnel carriers were unloaded at the main railroad station in Vilnius early this morning. The armored column headed for a military base on the northern outskirts of the city.

The Kremlin has already dispatched a paratroop regiment to Lithuania, together with several units of Interior Ministry troops. Over the last week, Soviet soldiers have been posted at the office of the chief Lithuanian prosecutor, the main printing works and several Communist Party buildings.

In a statement today, Lithuanian President Vytautas Landsbergis accused Gorbachev of "repeatedly rejecting" Lithuanian offers to hold talks. A Lithuanian delegation is

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expected to travel to Moscow Monday, but there is no guarantee that it will succeed in meeting Soviet government officials.

Gorbachev's statement insisting that the Lithuanians renounce their independence declaration appears to leave both Moscow and Vilnius with little room for maneuver. The Lithuanian independence movement Sajudis, which holds a majority in the parliament, is adamant that there can be no backing down on independence.

"The Soviets are trying to sow panic here [through a show of military force]. But we can't compromise on independence. People would not take us seriously if we did," said Zigmas Vaisvila, a Sajudis leader and head of a parliamentary committee on internal security, in a telephone interview from Vilnius.

Other Lithuanian sources said

that while there was no question of rescinding the independence declaration, the parliament might issue an additional statement expressing a readiness to take Soviet interests into account during a transitional period. The possibility of a referendum of voters in Lithuania's 3.7 million population is also under consideration.

To defuse the sensitive issue of the conscription of young Lithuanians into the Soviet army, Lithuanian leaders today effectively went back on an earlier pledge to protect draft evaders. The presidium of the Lithuanian parliament said each Lithuanian should decide whether or not to serve in the Soviet army.

The spring conscription campaign gets underway throughout the Soviet Union at the beginning of April. Any widespread boycott of the draft would be a serious blow to the Soviet army, which is largely made up of conscripts.